



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Marc Elrich

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Councilmember Marc Elrich Welcomes Report From Tenants Work Group

**Report Includes a Detailed Look at Issues Important to
95,000 Montgomery County Residents Who Rent**

ROCKVILLE, Md., March 8, 2010—Montgomery County Councilmember Marc Elrich has joined other members of the first-ever Tenants Work Group to present the group's report to County Executive Isiah Leggett. Councilmember Elrich was a driving force in the formation of the Tenants Work Group.

The report includes many recommendations intended to improve the situation for the approximately 95,000 renters in the county. It also includes the first-time Survey on Tenant Satisfaction in Montgomery County. The survey, which was commissioned by the Work Group, provides more information about the tenant experience.

Councilmember Elrich has been a dedicated advocate for tenants since his election to the County Council in 2006. His work on behalf of tenants dates to his service on the Takoma Park City Council.

"This report represents an important step forward for tenants in Montgomery County," said Councilmember Elrich, who is a member of the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee. "This is unprecedented. The work of this group includes a detailed look at the issues in our county particular to tenants. It reviews existing law and proposes improvements. Tenants are an integral part of our communities, and issues affecting renters deserve scrutiny."

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Although Councilmember Elrich chose to participate in the work group as a non-voting member, since he was the Council's representative, he agreed with virtually all of the recommendations.

"Some of the recommendations can and should be implemented quickly," he said. "For example, one recommendation regards data collection in the County. As we try to understand the situation for tenants in Montgomery County, we need to have accurate information. While the Tenant Satisfaction Survey provides tenant perspectives, we have no reliable data regarding rent increases in the County. I was dismayed to learn that the information in the County's Annual Rental Survey provides an inaccurate picture of the rental situation in the County. Fortunately, a better survey would be relatively easy to implement."

Councilmember Elrich also discussed rent increases. "Through both the Tenant Survey and via conversations with many tenants, I have heard repeatedly from tenants about unreasonable rent increases. Tenants worry that they will not be able to afford to stay in their homes."

Councilmember Elrich pointed out that tenants who are forced to move because of unaffordable rents leave behind neighbors, school friends and often, easier commutes to work.

"Stability for tenants is also good for our neighborhoods and our communities," he said. "It's time to institute some fair playing rules."

Councilmember Elrich also expressed support for recommendations for a "just cause" eviction law, creation of a tenant advocacy organization and for better communication with tenants—especially during times when rental apartments convert to condominiums.

"I extend my thanks to County Executive Ike Leggett for supporting my efforts to move this issue forward," said Councilmember Elrich, who also thanked the Work Group Chairman Matt Losak, State Senator Jamie Raskin and all members of the group for their hard work and contributions.

Councilmember Elrich served as a Takoma Park City Councilmember for 19 years before being elected to the County Council in 2006. He was one of the architects of the city's successful rent control law.

"Takoma Park demonstrates that tenants can have stable, affordable rents that also make it economical for landlords to reinvest in their properties and still make a profit," Councilmember Elrich said.

A copy of the County Tenants Work Group report is available online at:
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Content/EXEC/TWG/pdf/twg_report_3-2010.pdf

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